



Starmount

2018 Advent

Daily Devotionals

Week 1: November 30 - December 6th

Hymn: Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Reflections by Rev. Dr. Kathryn G. N. Campbell

Entry 1

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn*

-Isaiah 61:1-2

Charles Wesley wrote the text of this hymn in 1744 – one of the 6500(!) that he wrote in total throughout his life, some with his brother, John. As it is written on the website hymnary.org, this hymn “expresses deeply the two-fold purpose of the Advent season – we remember the birth of Christ, and fiercely desire His coming again. Perhaps more than some Advent hymns, this text especially expresses our longing for Christ's second coming.”

Like other familiar hymns Wesley writes, he utilizes quite a lot of scriptural references throughout the words. In this specific hymn, Wesley references 42 scriptural verses or passages ranging from 1 Samuel to Revelation. The first verse of this hymn sets the tone for the whole hymn as an energetic prayer for Jesus to come. The words of the prophet Isaiah speaks of the hope sought out in the messianic promise. From “fears and sins” to finding “rest in thee”, Wesley's hymn echoes the words of so many – the fears we have about what tomorrow may bring can be brought to God so we may find rest.

Prayer:

Dear God, may we find “joy in every longing heart” as we think about the gift that is to come in the form of a small child – Jesus is, indeed, long-expected in his coming. May we anticipate it with excitement and that joy of which this hymn speaks. Amen.

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Entry 2

*and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.'*

- Luke 1:47-55

This hymn is included twice in our *Glory to God* hymnal, as it was in the previous *Presbyterian Hymnal* found in our sanctuary. While both are beautiful to hear, it is the "HYFRODOL" tune that I appreciate most. When learning more about this hymn and this particular tune, I was surprised to hear that "hyfrodol" is Welsh for "tuneful" or "pleasant". I find myself chuckling when I learned that, considering that the tune is, indeed, pleasant to my ears.

The second verse of the hymn recognizes the promise found in the prophet's words – Jesus is *born* to deliver his people, *born* a child but yet a king, and *born* in reign in us forever. Writer Madeleine Marshall suggests that Jesus is born to act as midwife in the new birth of his people. The idea that Jesus was born a child and a king indicates the paradox that we wrestle with – stretching the limits of our understanding, we are to be in awe and wonder of such an event. The thought of this amazing experience allows us time to sit and ponder what it means for us today.

I appreciate the way the lines of melody and harmony intertwine, almost as if to dance. The words of the hymn speak of anticipation and hope; we find comfort in knowing what is to come. The hymn continues to speak of the many ways that Jesus' arrival will do so much for so many – something important that I think we all need to hear with the news of the day.

Prayer:

Dear God, we give thanks for Jesus and the gift that is to come in a few short weeks. In the midst of our busyness, open to us the gift of song and the ways we may discern your voice and call through melody and lyric. Amen.

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Entry 3

...and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- Ephesians 3:17-19

I love this hymn for a few reasons, one of which I talked about in a previous post – the ways that the lines of music move and dance together. Another reason I love this hymn is due to its positivity, rooted in hope. The third is a reason that surprised me a bit but became truer as I thought about it – there is another Charles Wesley hymn that this tune can be more closely associated: *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*. That hymn is identified as many as a sung prayer about Christ's work in our lives.

Examining the two other reasons for appreciating this hymn, I notice they are connected: both hymns are rooted in hope, joy, and love. With each week, the advent wreath is lit with anticipation of Christmas Eve. It is also lit so we can be reminded of the hope, joy, love, and peace that this season can bring. This hymn – a simple prayer of longing for healing of the brokenness of this world – repeats confidence that God will help us in our time of need through hope, joy, peace, and love. We cry out to God for the things that Jesus will bring without any hesitation or concern that God will not console or hear our needs.

Prayer:

Dear God, may we use this season of Advent as a time in to see how you are working in and through us to bring about your kingdom here on earth. May this season bring reassurance bring hope, joy, love, and peace we seek in you. Amen.